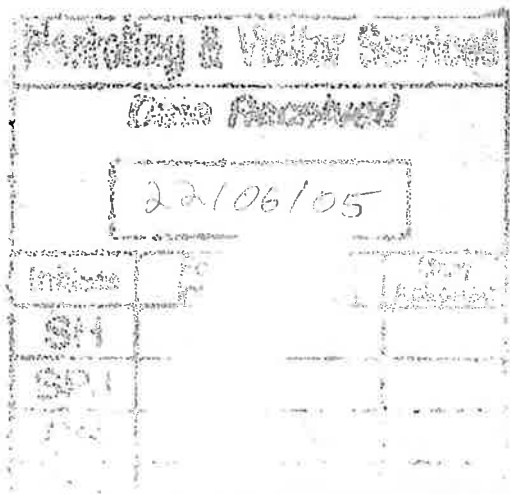


JUNE 2005

ISSUE 55



Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture

First Aid! Review

**Material Difficulties:
Objects and Narratives
that Disturb and Affect**

SHC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

SHCG NEWS will encourage and publish a wide range of views from those connected with history and museums. The NEWS aims to act as a channel for the exchange of information and opinions about current practice and theory in museums.

The views expressed in the newsletter are wide ranging and do not necessarily express the views of the SHCG committee or SHCG, unless otherwise stated.

Articles for the NEWS should be between 500 to 2000 words. Please submit a typed copy of your article along with a copy on disk, saved as a PC word file or richtext format, or you can send it as an Email. Illustrations for articles are always welcome. Original photographs can be returned.

Send all contributions to:
Sarah Maultby,
York Castle Museum,
The Eye of York,
York YO1 9RY
Email: news@shcg.org.uk

Contents photos:
Principal Survey of English Dialects fieldworker Stanley Ellis interviewing an informant at Addingham Moorside near Ilkley (West Yorkshire), c.1967.

SHCG News design by Paul Cook
Email: info@pcookdesign.co.uk

Join SHCG?

If you're reading this and you're not a member of SHCG but would like to join please contact:

Kitty Ross,
Abbey House Museum,
Abbey Road,
Kirkstall,
Leeds LS5 3EH
Tel: 0113 2305499
Email: membership@shcg.org.uk

Write an article for the SHCG News?

You can write an article for the News on any subject that you feel would be interesting to the museum's community. Project write ups, book reviews, object studies, papers given and so on. We welcome a wide variety of articles relating to social history and Museums.

DEADLINE FOR
NEXT ISSUE:
MON 3RD OCTOBER

Welcome to Issue 55, a bumper edition of the SHCG News. In the Bulletin Board section there are a number of notices from SHCG including an advert for the Annual Conference in South Wales from 30th June to 2nd July, an advanced notice of forthcoming seminars and information about how to join the SHCG email list.

The Theory and Practice section includes an article about the project to make the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture accessible to the public for the first time since the Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies closed in 1983. 'Material Difficulties: Objects and Narratives that Disturb and Affect' is a new research project led by Gaynor Kavanagh. SHCG members are invited to become involved by providing case studies for the project. For more information about the project and how to get involved turn to page 8.

The Medical seminar held in February and organised by SHCG is reviewed in this edition along with two other seminars not organised by SHCG but worthy of inclusion as they are both interesting for social historians. The first one is the review of the one day conference on Dialect and Folk Life Studies in Britain, held at Leeds University, and the second one is a review of the Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions.

I hope you enjoy this edition and I will put out the usual plea for articles, submitting a review of an exhibition, a book or a piece for the Object Focus section looks great on your CPD plan and is surprisingly easy to complete! I look forward to hearing from you. Have a lovely summer and see you in South Wales for the Annual Conference.

SARAH MAULTBY—EDITOR

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ASW 2005:

'The Real Thing...?'

30th June–2nd July 2005

South Wales

The 2005 Annual Conference will look at how museums use different interpretation strategies to present their collections, create better public access and engage with a variety of audiences.

Case studies will look at a variety of practices including visioning for new galleries and museums, increasing access through creative collections management projects, promoting access through IT, working with handling collections, delivering live interpretation and utilising new technologies.

Visits to:

- National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff
- Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans
- National Waterfront Museum, Swansea
- Big Pit, National Mining Museum of Wales, Blaenafon, Torfaen

For more information please contact:

Zelda Baveystock (SHCG),
Discovery Museum,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4JA
Email:
zelda.baveystock@twmuseums.org.uk.
Total conference fee is £246



SHCG SEMINARS

Next year's seminar programme is now at a planning stage, but there's still time to get in touch if you feel that we can meet your training needs.

We have three seminars planned for the 2005/6 programme:

An Introduction to Ceramics

This day will be run in conjunction with the Society of Decorative Art Curators. If you don't know your stoneware from your pearlware, or your delft from your Spode, this seminar should provide you with some enlightenment. The programme will provide plenty of opportunity for hands-on identification, and leave you with tips and suggestions for future enquiries and research into your own collections.

How to Identify Watchamacallits

Back again by popular demand. If you have objects lurking in your store that you need help to identify (who hasn't?), or you feel that a back to basics seminar would meet your training needs, this is the course for

you. The day's programme will focus around hands-on, small group, practical sessions looking at identification techniques for social history objects. With the emphasis on strategies for demystifying any mystery item, the course will be helpful for all kinds of objects.

Social History Curators - do they exist anymore?

The development of Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs) in areas such as medicine and health, contemporary collecting, and costume and textiles, poses questions about the role of the Social History Curators Group, and the wider role of general social history curators. This seminar will include speakers from some of the existing SSNs, and investigate the different stages that they have got to and their plans for the future. It will also look at the practical reality of being a social history curator, potentially embodying all of the different specialisms within an organisation. How can the Social History Curators Group help you in your role, and what other resources are available to support your work and development?

Please get in touch by Email: seminars@shcg.org.uk



Celebrating Plastic

plasticsnetwork.org is the international collaborative project that will create a unique interactive website focussing upon the design, history, manufacture and application of plastics in product design and associated contexts. The project is supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through its Project Fund Scheme - a £30,000 award.

The project brings together key international partners; The Plastics Historical Society, The Bakelite Museum in Somerset, the National Plastics Center, Massachusetts, USA and The Arts Institute at Bournemouth. The partnership unites key professionals from a diverse range of disciplines and contexts relating to plastic, including industry, design and education, to create a rich interactive resource that considers the various forms and roles of this great material.

The website, to be launched in September 2005, will provide a one-stop resource for designers, historians, students, researchers and wider audiences who are interested in learning more about plastics. The thematic website will explore key examples, concepts and issues relating to plastic. For example the *Design and Designers* section will present information relating to the concepts of form and function, aesthetics, kitsch, ergonomics and style and will showcase key designers and design examples, both historical and contemporary. The website will feature case studies and 'talking head' interviews with eminent figures within the plastics field and prime

design examples from across the collections of the four partner organisations.

A major international symposium 'Plastic!' will be hosted by The Arts Institute at Bournemouth on Thursday 29th September 2005 to celebrate the launch of the website and to explore further the fantastic world of plastic. The symposium, open to all, will explore

The Importance of National Parks

As someone interested in the environment and our cultural heritage, you know the importance of keeping our National Parks beautiful and healthy for present and future generations.

England & Wales have 12 National Parks: The Broads, Brecon Beacons, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lake District, New Forest, Northumberland, North York Moors, Peak District, Pembrokeshire Coast, Snowdonia, and the Yorkshire Dales. Scotland has Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and the Cairngorms. The South Downs too are under consideration for National Park status.

Do you belong to a special interest body or to a local group needing speakers to address its meetings? The Council for National Parks (CNP) has speakers who give talks almost anywhere in England and

the various aspects of plastic through a range of international keynote speakers, displays and discussion forums. Topics will include design, history, conservation and sustainability from speakers Patrick Cooke (of the Bakelite Museum); Nick Crosbie (of the design company Inflate); Alan Griffiths (recognised for his personal contribution at the Plastics Industry Annual Awards in 2004); Chris Lefterie (designer and senior lecturer at Central St Martin's College of Art and Design); Thea Van Oosten (international conservation scientist) and Colin Williamson (of Smile Plastics).

plasticsnetwork.org and symposium is further celebrated by the accompanying 'Plastic!' exhibition at the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, East Cliff, Bournemouth, from 20th September to 20th November 2005. The exhibition will consider the phenomenal existence of plastics in popular culture through an intriguing range of examples from the plasticsnetwork.org partners.

For further information on plasticsnetwork.org - the website, symposium, exhibition or the Arts Institute at Bournemouth Design Collection Museum please contact:

Sarah Harbige - Project Manager
Tel: 01202 363121
Email: sharbige@aib.ac.uk

Design Collection Museum Manager
Tel: 01202 363255
Email: plangdown@aib.ac.uk

Wales, illustrated by colour slides. They show the Parks' beauty and diversity; and explain the problems and challenges the National Park movement faces, such as conservation, sustainable development, quarrying, energy, tourism, transport (both in and to the Parks), and military training.

Our speakers are volunteers and charge only travel costs, though a donation to CNP is also invited. Can you get your group or organisation interested in having a National Parks talk? Few groups fail to enjoy these attractively illustrated talks, given the chance.

For information or bookings, contact:

Adrian Thornton, Phoenix Cottage, Cassington, Witney, Oxon OX29 4DL (01865-880359), who will gladly liaise with an appropriate local speaker.

Brothers and Sisters, Knights and Nobles: From Clubs to Class Identity

**Are you the descendent of a Phoenix?
Were your ancestors Foresters or are you
related to a Buffalo? If any of your
family ever joined a trades union or a
benefit club, then you may be!**

This year's Summer exhibition at Freemasons' Hall unlocks the hidden history of the Sisters of the Phoenix, the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Free Gardeners and the Oddfellows, just some of the amazingly diverse and colourful friendly societies and fraternal associations to which millions of people once belonged. Their flamboyant aprons and badges, mottoes and commemorative objects were once familiar in every town and city in the country.

In any boot fair, collectors shop and on Ebay you will find sashes, medals or ribbon collars marked with mysterious images or abbreviations such as KOM, Primo or PCN. These are reminders of the friendly and fraternal societies that provided moral leadership, health benefits and sociability for their members of all ages, men and women alike from the 1700s, many still with us today, part of a family of voluntary

associations that included co-operatives, trades unions and building societies.

Using the objects, costumes, documents and literature, the exhibition will explore the growth and development of these organisations, their impact on their local society and their legacy today.

Shire Books' major new title *Discovering Friendly and Fraternal Societies: their Badges and Regalia* by Victoria Solt Dennis is the first ever pictorial guide to these items and the exhibition coincides with its publication. Many of the objects illustrated in the book will be on display.

The exhibition is on between Monday 27th June and Friday 30th September 2005 (Monday to Fridays only).

Open: 11am to 5pm, Admission free.

For more information contact:

**The Library and Museum
of Freemasonry,
Diane Clements - Director,
Freemasons Hall,
Great Queen Street,
London WC2
Tel: 020 7395 9250**

The Museum of Contraception and Abortion in Vienna would like help to find historical devices and instruments, films, posters, leaflets, books and documents on contraception and abortion as loans or donations?

The Museum of Contraception and Abortion in Vienna (Austria) preserves the history of contraception - a right which was so hard fought for by Britain's Marie Stopes (1880-1958) and many others.

The museum will be opening next autumn and is one of only two such institutions in the world.

Whoever is interested in learning more about its mission may see www.contraceptive-museum.org or send an email to receive the monthly newsletter free of charge (verhuetung@aon.at).

The museum's internet database containing all our items and books will be accessible free of charge for everybody in a few weeks.

If you have any items for us please contact:

**Susanne Krejsa,
Museum of Contraception,
Mariahilfer Guertel 37,
A-1040 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +43/699/178 178 04
Fax: +43/1/892 25 81
www.contraceptive-museum.org**



SHCG MATTERS

New SHCG email list for members

Social History Curators Group is launching a new email list exclusive to SHCG members, replacing the members area of the SHCG website. The list exists to discuss news, issues and information relating to all aspects of social history in museums. The list has been under development during the last few months, and a number of members who previously answered a questionnaire have already joined.

Feedback from our popular seminars and annual study weekends shows how much curators value the opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge, and SHCG hopes that by developing this list we can provide a valuable additional channel of communication between members.

The email list is already proving a valuable forum to discuss topical issues such as participation in the new subject specialist networks. The list has been used to share

experiences of practical questions such as the possibility of transferring oral history recordings from reel to reel tapes onto CDs. As membership of the list grows, SHCG hopes that it will become a community able to draw on the expertise of social history curators in both large and small museums nationwide.

The list uses powerful, flexible software for reliable operation and to give subscribers the highest levels of protection from spam and viruses, in addition to your personal or institutional defenses.

Joining the list

We hope that as many members as possible will join the new list. If you work for an institutional member, any interested colleagues in your organisation may also join the list. To join SHCG-LIST please send an email to shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk (this is also the address for any queries you may have) stating your name and whether

you are a personal member or employed by an institutional member. If you work for an institutional member, please also state the name of the institution. You will receive an automated acknowledgement of your request, but please note that requests to join the list are then processed manually, not automatically. Although requests will usually be processed within 48 hours, please be patient and allow up to 10 days.

What happens next?

Once your membership is processed you will receive two automatically generated emails, one containing a jargon-free guide to how the list works and one containing more technical information about the list. You should save both of these emails for future reference as they contain important information such as how to unsubscribe from the list. You will then receive all emails sent by members to the list address, and will be able to post messages yourself.

We hope that you will join SHCG-LIST. Please Email: shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk if you have any questions about the list.



The Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture

The Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture (LAVC) at the University of Leeds comprises the archives of the Survey of English Dialects (ca. 1948-1978), the former Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies (1964-1983), and dialect-related materials which predate both.

Kathryn Jenner—Research Assistant

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School of English,
University of Leeds,
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Tel: 0113 34 32236
www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc/

Dialectologist Harold Orton was instrumental in the development of dialect and folklife collections at Leeds. Some of the earliest items in the Archive relate to Orton's work on the survey of Northumbrian dialects conducted through Armstrong College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the 1930s (the 'Orton Corpus'), including a number of gramophone recordings of dialect speakers. Orton was a key figure in establishing the Survey of English Dialects (SED) in the late 1940s, along with Swiss colleague Eugen Dieth. The Survey was conducted from the School of English Language and Medieval Literature at the University of Leeds, and based on research by a team of fieldworkers working in 313 localities in England and the Welsh Borders. Fieldwork was conducted between 1950 and 1961, and based on a 1300-item questionnaire compiled by Orton and Dieth with the backing of the Philological Society. Informants were also encouraged to speak freely. The information collected was recorded phonetically and audio-taped. Items in the LAVC relating to the SED include drafts and testing of the

Questionnaire; fieldwork recording books; audio recordings on open-reel tape and gramophone disc; papers relating to the publication programme; and items from two other publications based on SED fieldwork: *A Word Geography of England*, by Orton and Nathalia Wright (1974); and the *Linguistic Atlas of England*, edited by Stewart Sanderson and John Widdowson (1978).

Harold Orton realised that the data collected, contacts made, and equipment used in the SED could be utilised in survey work and research in folklore. He championed the establishment of a centre for the study, teaching, and research of folklore at the University of Leeds and in November 1959, with Professor A. Norman Jeffares, tabled proposals for an Institute for Dialect and Folk Life Studies. This led to the establishment of a lectureship in Folk Life Studies at Leeds and the inception of a Folk Life Survey focussing initially on Yorkshire. Folklorist Stewart Sanderson was appointed to the lectureship and as Director of the Survey. Following the success of another proposal by Orton in October 1963, the Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies



Above: Putting the finishing touches to the 'Burning Bartle' for the Bartle Fair at West Witton (North Yorkshire), Werner Kissling, 1967.

Left: 'Trailing' for bonfire wood, Castle Bolton (North Yorkshire). c.1967.



Above: Principal Survey of English Dialects fieldworker Stanley Ellis interviewing an informant at Addingham Moorside near Ilkley (West Yorkshire). c.1967.

(IDFLS) was established. It opened in 1964 under Sanderson's directorship.

Throughout its lifetime the IDFLS was committed to furthering the work of the Folk Life Survey and creating Archives of folklore, folklife and dialect. Its teaching activities aimed at stimulating students' interest and imagination in folklore, folklife and dialect studies, and training them in research, fieldwork methodologies, and related professional skills. Items in the LAVC created and collected by the IDFLS and the Folk Life Survey include staff papers (including the papers of Stewart Sanderson); student research papers (theses, dissertations and coursework); research papers by external academics and researchers; the Folk Life File (a classified collection of ms. and printed ephemera); archivists' papers; audio-recordings on open-reel, audio-cassette and gramophone disc; photographic prints, including the Photo File (a classified collection of photographs); slides and photographic negatives (including lantern slides and glass negatives); film and video; a small collection of artefacts; and a collection of published works.

As the above might suggest, the LAVC is a substantial multiple media archive containing collections of significant linguistic and cultural research value. Following the closure of the IDFLS in 1983, the future of these collections was for some time uncertain. The bulk of the Archive was moved to Leeds University Library's Special Collections in the early 1990s. However, with no comprehensive finding aid to the collections, it has remained relatively inaccessible to most researchers. Having recognised the Archive's unfulfilled potential, Dr. Clive Upton (School of English) and Dr. Oliver Pickering (Leeds University Library) put forward a proposal under the Arts and Humanities Research

Board's Resource Enhancement Scheme with the aim of remedying this situation. The bid was successful, and a major grant was awarded to support a project to sort and arrange the Archive, create a Web-deliverable catalogue of its holdings, digitise the collection of sound recordings, and document Incidental Material collected for the SED. The project began in June 2002.

The first task in organising and cataloguing the LAVC was to gain physical control of the Archive. Further items relating to the SED and the IDFLS were located in various parts of the School of English. Following the retrieval of these items, an initial assessment of the content, condition, and storage requirements of the Archive was undertaken. Rehousing items using archival quality storage materials has been a priority of the LAVC project, particularly given that its outcome aims at facilitating increased use of the Archive.

The next task was to gain intellectual control of the Archive. Each box was numbered, and a rough handlist produced of the contents as found. A scheme of arrangement was drafted and 17 distinct subfonds identified, based primarily on form and function. Investigations were undertaken to ascertain any existing schemes of physical and intellectual arrangement remaining from when the items were created or in use. Maintaining original order has been seen as important in terms of evidential value, i.e. what the Archive's content, scope and arrangement tells of the life and functions of its creators.

Thought was given at an early stage as to how the Archive catalogue should be structured, and what standards and software would be appropriate. The electronic mark-up protocol Encoded Archival Description (EAD) was used to structure the catalogue. EAD allows multi-level cataloguing, and the

representation of the descriptive hierarchies within the catalogue and their inter-relationships. It also complies with internationally recognised descriptive standards such as ISAD(G) (General International Standard Archival Description), and is platform-independent. The XML (Extensible Mark-up Language) authoring software X-MetaL was used to construct the EAD records. XML is Web-compatible and allows for extensive hypertext linking and flexible information retrieval options.¹

A number of EAD templates were constructed, which served as the basis for all of the LAVC cataloguing. These represented the various combinations of cataloguing levels used within each subfonds. The choice of EAD data elements for the templates was based on those required by ISAD(G)2, and elements needed to adequately describe Archive items and build search functionality into the catalogue. Time constraints combined with the quantity and variety of material to be described necessitated decisions as to the level to which each subfonds should be catalogued. Each section has been catalogued at least to series level in order to ensure a reasonably detailed coverage; audio-visual items have been catalogued to item-level.

A cataloguing pilot was undertaken to test the templates and resolve any problems and queries arising from their use. A discreet and format-variable subfonds was taken as the subject of the pilot, which was completed in January 2004. Cataloguing work on the LAVC has been ongoing since this time. Each catalogue record includes elements that will facilitate searching the Archive by personal name, corporate name, placename, and subject. Subject headings have been taken from established thesauri: Library of Congress Subject Headings

(LCSH), supplemented by terms from the American Folklore Society's Ethnographic Thesaurus. Catalogue users will also be able to search by song title, collection/unit title, reference number, and using full text searching. Hyperlink references will allow for navigation between records for intellectually related items. It will also be possible to virtually navigate between levels of the catalogue via a Table of Contents display. Cheshire search and retrieval software will provide the interface for the catalogue. Developed at the University of Liverpool, Cheshire was made specifically for use with EAD, and is already used by the UK Archives Hub. The catalogue gateway will be provided through the LAVC Web pages, which at the time of writing include information on the Archive and the project, and a selection of images from the Archive's photographic collections.

The LAVC project has also included sound digitisation, documenting of SED Incidental Material. Work began in December 2002 to create access copies of the

collection of over 880 cassette and open-reel audio tape recordings, and was largely completed in January 2005.² The contents were copied in real time allowing for the creation of cataloguing notes. During the course of copying, samples were identified for inclusion in the completed LAVC resource. 17 audio samples, representative of the Archive's scope, will be available through the LAVC Web pages. Users will be able to navigate from the catalogue records for the recordings from which the samples were taken to the samples themselves.

During the first year of the project, Incidental Material collected by SED fieldworkers but not used in the publication programme was analysed.

The information was listed and arranged into discreet categories in order to make it more readily available to future researchers. The documents produced during this analysis will be mounted on the LAVC Web pages. Hyperlinks will be made between catalogue records for sets of SED response books and the documents relating to them.

The LAVC project is now nearing completion. In February of this year, an exhibition of LAVC items was mounted in the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds. In March, dialectologists and folklorists attended a conference organised by the LAVC project team as part of the build-up to the catalogue launch. Papers on the day considered the collection, preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of dialect and folklife resources in Britain. The LAVC catalogue will be launched in June 2005.

Footnotes:

1: Before making a firm decision on EAD and X-Metal software, it was possible to 'test out' both at a training workshop organised by the Society of Archivists.

2: This part of the project might have been completed at an earlier date had it not been for the demise of the first open-reel tape machine and the delay in finding a suitable, working replacement.

Material Difficulties: Collecting Objects and Narratives that Disturb and Affect

Museum practice is frequently driven by the imperatives of survival. To that end, initiatives concerned with maximising attendance, achieving educational targets and increasing spend per head consume our thinking.

Gaynor Kavanagh

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Museum accreditation now demands, quite rightly, significant evidence that museums are taking holistic and professional approaches, with well-defined and coherent policies in all the appropriate areas. In the midst of all of this, I want to raise questions about something very central, the thing that makes all the rest of it possible: collections. Particularly, I want to raise questions about acquisition, especially where it means bringing together objects and narratives that can disturb and affect.

Collecting social history has always had a fairly pragmatic quality and at times an underlying uncertainty. Historically, there has been the urge to collect in typological

series or in loose timeframes that start shakily in the late nineteenth century (maybe with a lucky nod or too to the eighteenth) and grind to a halt with a gas mask. The type of material so collected has been further delineated by its size: anything that doesn't fit into a car boot being definitely outside collecting policy. It has also been delineated by availability. Some collections are a micawber-esque residue, the sum total of things that 'turned up'. As a result, some collections are a hymn to cycles of material redundancy that existed in a bygone pre-car boot sale age, before people learned they could actually 'flog it'.

Passive approaches to acquisition have led to collections with frustratingly stunted profiles, thoroughly inadequate for the diverse and complex worlds in which we live. Often without contextual information, they cover our social history like a paper doily. Their limitations are exposed whenever new displays, outreach work and educational opportunities demand more than the anodyne. At their best, they represent an extraordinary rich resource, available for new forms of analysis and sharp questions. Without this, they are the

stuff that holds social history in an arrested intellectual state, falling short of the resource needed to build museums invested with social relevance and the possibility for cultural inspiration.

In contrast and thankfully, whist still open to the best of the serendipitous nature of things 'turning up', determined pro-active approaches to acquisition are substantially more evident across the field. Many curators now wisely opt for more integrated, documentary approaches to acquisition. Often driven by the imperatives of making new exhibitions, a pro-active rather than re-active stance has to be taken. The city museums especially lead the way in this, from Liverpool to Glasgow and London, but they are not alone. Recording through a considered balance of oral testimony, visual image and material evidence has proven itself as the means by which museums can promote the creation of social history collections with long-term value through their significance. Such forms of acquisition places museums much closer to people whose histories they seek to represent. As a result, acquisition and recording demands complex forms of cooperation and

partnerships. It's a worthwhile venture, giving them half a chance of fulfilling some of the great rhetorical trusts of museum debate - all those claims about insight and reflection, learning and self-discovery.

This being so, it is important to recognise that it takes tremendous energy, confidence and significant power of persuasion to curate in this way. It renders the curator open to rejection, hostility and failure. Trying to persuade a member of the public to participate in the museum's project of collection is no mean feat. They are being asked to give (freely, no doubt) their time, memories, self-image and the all-prized object. Success in this rests on the curator having not just advanced reflective understanding of the subject that they are dealing with, as well as the professional appreciation of what it will mean to gather in and use this material, but also and importantly at a personal level - sound social skills and much resilience.

The acts and processes of acquisition is a thoroughly underestimated area of curatorial practice and possibly one of the least developed in terms of professional training and academic study. Most museum studies courses prepare students in the processes of addressing an object biography. Whilst fully acknowledging the value of this to core curatorial practice, I contend it remains problematic for the specifics of social history in museums, as it foregrounds object-centred rather than people-centred enquiry. Theorising the significance of an object and the rugged contours of a collection has helped expose how uncontested thinking gives rise to partial collections and restricted interpretation. However, the work in this area tends to address that which is safe, sound and already within museum walls. The great academic works on collecting such as that by Susan Pearce, have tended to address the private worlds of individuals or the major (traditional) museums. Moreover the very useful discussion available about museum collecting tends to concentrate on what is either in or indeed out of collections, the inclusion and exclusions (e.g. Knell 1999). The *Making Histories* series made some inroads into this subject, but there is a lot more that needs to be uncovered and discussed. Altogether, in thinking about museums, I believe there has been an insufficient inquisitiveness about the bottle it takes to get the stuff into the collection in the first place, and what the consequences of this are - on the curator, the donor and the collection as a whole.

In *Dream Spaces* (2000), I addressed issues that arise in the gathering of oral testimony.

I contend that there is a range of complex issues associated with the bringing to mind of memories, both for the informant and for the curator. These have significant impact on how meaning is made from oral testimony. In turn these raise ethical and moral issues about the process that must stand alongside academic ones. Curators have 'acquired' people's memories in the form of oral history. Through an interview they have created a product, an artefact in a way. I argue that this has an influence not simply on the collective record, but on the person whose memory is 'taken' and the person who gathered it in. I am concerned that people hear oral history, but don't always listen to it and its many nuances, resulting in forms of disempowerment, not least of the record itself.

When working on *Dream Spaces*, I became interested in the nature of dementia. To understand what it's like to have memory, one needs to have an awareness of what it is like to have significant memory impairment; sometimes the extremes of things provides better insight into the everyday. More recently, I've been looking at traumatic and difficult memories again to illuminate something of the everyday, not least into how objects and images bring experiences to mind.

I'm now working on a new book, called *Museums in a Broken World* and I would be very grateful for help from SHCG members. I'm preparing a study on objects and narratives that disturb and affect and am particularly interested in issues around collecting. My interest is not only in the high profile trauma, as important as that is. I'm keen to learn about not only how collecting has revealed not only complex and difficult histories of the everyday, but also how memories of complicated experiences are invested in very ordinary objects. (I have an equal interest in the exhibition and use of this material too and won't be passing up opportunities to learn more about this, but for now the main point of enquiry is collecting.)

I have been fortunate to get a British Academy Grant to travel to museums in the UK to listen to people's experiences of collecting. I shall be travelling to Stockholm in July to see the exhibition at the National Maritime Museum on the Estonia disaster and to talk with the curators who put together a travelling exhibition called *Difficult Matters* which is about objects that chafe the memory. Later in the year, I'll be travelling to Washington to talk with curators at the Smithsonian about collecting material from 9/11.

I would be glad if SHCG members could

contact me if they are able to offer case studies of collecting and recording. These could be about material within established collections (the unworn pair of baby slippers, or the object with diverse histories), or about material that turned up out of the blue. Information about your efforts to find and acquire specific memories and things would be especially welcome. It could be something that worked beyond all expectation or failed completely, something that led to a real sense of accomplishment, or ended in tears. Maybe you have had experiences of working with other organisations, or have drawn on the expertise of other museums. I'm happy to keep information on a non-attributable basis, if need be, or to give all formal credit, whatever is best and agreed.

Further, I would be glad of your personal reflection on what it is like for you to go out, find and acquire things, to participate (or not) in the extraordinary process we call acquisition. Is it the best part of your work or does it fill you with dread? I need to know about your successes, as well as what hasn't worked, and how this affected you. Beyond case studies, if you think you have object biographies that would be worth me visiting your collection to see, then please do let me know. I need as wide a range of case studies as is possible. Similarly, if you feel it would be more useful to talk through some of these issues, then please get in touch.

At the beginning of next year, I'm planning to organise a workshop to bring together people with experiences of the best and worst of active acquisition. If you feel you have something to contribute to this, something you need to get out of it, or would simply like to be involved in some way, please let me know. I have funds to cover some travel costs for people who might otherwise have difficulty getting there. I have yet to set the date or venue, but I will be able to let people know through SHCG. I look forward to hearing from you.

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First aid!

An introduction to medical collections

How many museums have medical objects, and how many have the confidence to identify, care for and display them? 20 delegates from Dorset to Tyne and Wear braved the snow to gather in London in search of enlightenment on the medical curiosities lurking in their stores.

**Tate Greenhalgh—Assistant Curator
Thackray Museum, Leeds**

Our host for the seminar was the Royal College of Surgeons, offering us the exciting prospect of being among the first to see the newly refurbished Hunterian Museum. This privilege was somewhat reduced for the best possible reason. The museum had stimulated overwhelming interest, receiving several hundred visitors in its first few days since re-opening. Speakers from a cross-section of medical museums began the day by discussing their particular specialisms. The afternoon provided a guided tour of the Hunterian by Keeper, Stella Mason and a hands-on identification session.

Dental Collections

First to speak was Rachel Bairstow, Head of Museum Services at the British Dental Association. All of the objects in the stores

had recently been sifted through while the museum was closed for refurbishment. During this process they unearthed many miscellaneous items that posed safety risks such as hypodermic needles and human remains. This enabled her to outline some of the key health and safety issues that arise when dealing with dental collections.

The hazardous nature of many items identified during this process highlighted the need for good attention to detail when developing new storage facilities in accordance with health and safety. They decided to dispose of any controlled drugs requiring licences. Other material, for example equipment containing asbestos, was also disposed of because of danger identified under COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) guidelines. She advised that gas cylinders should be disposed of unless the contents are reliably identified as safe, valves are free of rust and they can be kept well ventilated and away from heat. They also undertook a radiological survey, appointing a Radiation Protection Advisor. It is necessary to consult the Health and Safety Executive and relevant authorities e.g. fire brigade whatever quantity of radioactive material is present. Disposal of such material is a lengthy process, taking the BDA just short of

a year. Retained radioactive material requires a risk assessment, careful packaging and monthly location checks.

Rachel recommended consulting the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk for advice on appropriate procedures. A list of controlled drugs titled 'Medicines, Ethics & Practice: A Guide for Pharmacists' is published by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and they can be disposed through the local council.

Surgical Instruments

Sarah Pearson, Assistant Curator of the Hunterian Museum gave guidelines on dating surgical instruments. The Royal College of Surgeons' collection contains 7,000 surgical instruments from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. They receive assistance in identification from retired surgeons with historic knowledge. Pre 18th century instruments were made by blacksmiths and do not possess the specific makers marks of post 18th century specimens. Some marks include symbols or addresses that aid dating. Trade catalogues produced by individual firms from the mid 20th century are valuable tools for dating objects if you already have some idea of their purpose.

Early instrument materials included silver, gold and copper that were later replaced by harder metals such as bronze and steel more suited to making blades. Mother of pearl, wood and ivory were succeeded by corrosion-resistant nickel- or chrome-plated steel and later stainless steel after the introduction of sterilisation.

Sarah also provided a brief history of amputation. Before anaesthesia this had been incredibly painful. Surgeons had to be very strong and perform the procedure quickly. Robert Liston boasted at completing an amputation in 28 seconds. From the 17th century surgeons used circular knives to attempt to leave comfortable stumps for prostheses, retaining some function in the limb. In the 19th century flap-amputations using straight knives and saws became popular, leaving a flap of skin to fold over the end of the stump. In the 1930s techniques were developed to reduce the need for amputation such as excision and trepanning to drain the bone. In the 19th century the crucial control of blood-loss was aided by the use of cautery irons, Petit's screw tourniquet, field tourniquets, Strum artery forceps and sterile ligatures, developed by Lister to stitch blood vessels.

Optical Collections

The College of Optometrists' British Optical Association Museum was represented by its Curator, Neil Handley. The British Optical Association (now defunct) was founded in

1895 as the first professional body for opticians. The museum was founded six years later by John Sutcliffe who had dedicated his life to optics. At present the collection has in excess of 8,000 objects. It holds the national collection of contact lenses and Neil invited us to sympathise with him the next time we drop a contact lens! Neil outlined the history of the optometrist profession, the evolution of spectacles and correct terminology.

Before 1860 the eye test did not exist. Opticians' shops sold philosophical and scientific instruments like telescopes and microscopes. Spectacles were most commonly bought from travelling market peddlers and merely offered immense magnification, misconstruing bigger for better. London's Moorfields Hospital was the first institution to perform eye examinations using specific instruments to look into the eye combined with objective and subjective tests to indicate a suitable corrective device.

The first spectacles are known from 1380(?) and consisted of two framed lenses joined by a hinge and would be held briefly to the eyes. No spectacles before 1730 had sides and early examples were designed to fit into the folds of wigs only hooking around the ears in the 1850s. Plastic frames became popular the early 20th century though problems with early cellulose nitrate plastics led to its replacement with cellulose acetate. This proved to be much more stable, not degrading or reacting with the skin.

The museum website, accessible via the 'MusEYEum' link at www.college-optometrists.org, provides articles and classification of ophthalmic devices.

Pharmaceutical Collections

Briony Hudson, Keeper at the Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain was the final speaker. The RPSGB was set up in 1841 as a professional body to distinguish legitimate practitioners from quacks. The museum, founded in 1842, collected materia medica and contemporary drugs until the 1930s when historic material was included in its remit. Though most of the materia medica have now been removed to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the collection contains in excess of 45,000 items. Contemporary collecting is actively pursued through contact with a series of practicing pharmacists. They now collect two of all proprietary (brand name) medicines, thereby providing a sample should future chemical testing of them be requested.

Briony supplied handouts published by the RPSGB detailing care and safety issues for historic pharmacy collections.

When handling historic medicines, the RPSGB advises that anything potentially harmful should be treated with caution. Protective clothing should be worn (minimum of plastic surgical gloves), exposure to harmful substances minimised and containers transported safely. Containers often warn of hazardous contents e.g. fluted, ribbed or coloured bottles but this is not always the case, therefore take care with unlabelled containers. Do not eat, drink or smoke whilst handling historic medicines and do not handle them while pregnant. "Remember, if you are in possession of any dubious substances ask a pharmacist for advice on disposal. If you are offered a collection which contains drugs, consult a pharmacist or, better still, take one with you." (RPSGB, Pointers to the handling of drug collections). The Royal Pharmaceutical Society publishes an excellent series of information sheets on pharmaceutical history, recommended topic-based resource lists and guidelines for the care of pharmaceutical collections.

After lunch we discovered why the Hunterian was causing such a stir. The £3million renovation was striking. Aside from the academic attraction and perhaps elements of morbid fascination to many exhibits, the new displays brought out their beauty too. It was a real pleasure to see it without jostling with the crowds that had swarmed in the week before. Stella talked

us through the strategy behind the project, explaining how they had improved on the previous display structures before leaving us to explore at our leisure.

A hands-on session followed, as each speaker from the morning session had brought along some objects from their collections. It was great to be able to see a pill-making demonstration and get a closer look at some of the objects that had been talked about in the morning. The day provided an excellent overview of the common issues that arise with medical collections. Most delegates attended with particular aspects of their collections in mind and the chance to pick the brains of experts was invaluable. We also came away with ideas of how to source further information.

Work is in progress to establish a Medical History Subject Specialist Network.

It is hoped that museums and curators with medical collections will forge a partnership to share specialist knowledge, skills and resources to raise the profile of the nation's medical heritage, enhance the knowledge of partners and increase access for the general public and researchers alike. A preliminary database of members is currently being compiled by the Thackray Museum and they intend to host a conference this coming July. All interested parties are asked to contact Tate Greenhalgh at the Thackray for further information on 0113 244 4343 or tateg@thackraymuseum.org.

Leeds Food Symposium

The twentieth Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions was held in York on 16th April. The collection of cookery books in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds was the inspiration behind the setting up of the Symposium back in 1986, and it is organised by a small but knowledgeable committee who are interested in historic food.

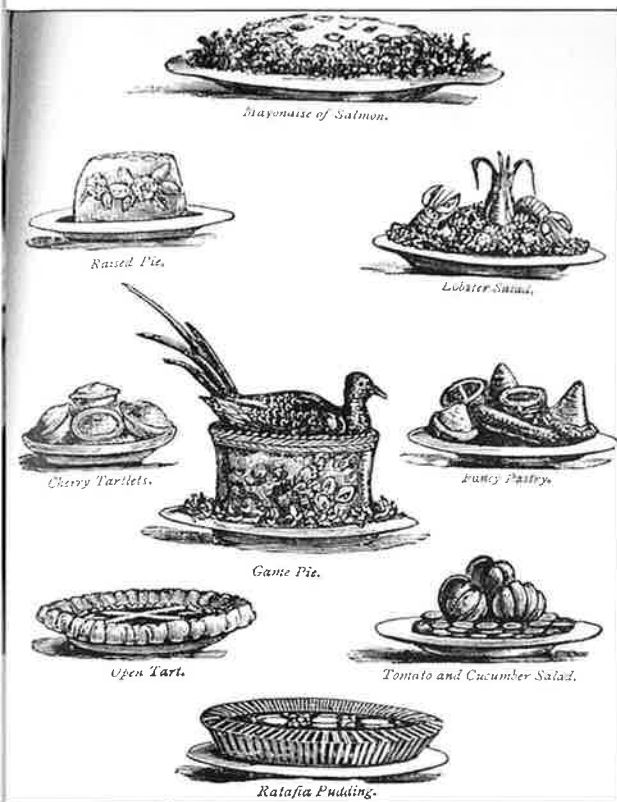
Sarah Maultby

**Assistant Curator of Social History,
York Castle Museum**

One of the real joys of the day and also the reason why it is now held in a venue in York and not at the University of Leeds is that delegates bring along a dish to feed 2/3 people for a communal lunch. (University of Leeds

changed their policy on allowing food to be brought in, and it was agreed that the lunch was too important to stop doing so they moved to a new venue.) With so many historic food experts in the room the dishes are often made from old recipes so there is a great variety and dishes are cut in to small portions so you can try as many as you want too. The highlight of this year on the sweet table was a cake cooked in an elaborate Victorian mould, it stood twice the height of the desserts around it and looked stunning (it tasted good too!)

The theme for this year's Symposium was Baking: From Cereal Crops to Oven-Baked Goods. John Letts started the day with a talk about crops from medieval times to the nineteenth century. Letts is an archaeologist and a botanist and started studying seeds found in archaeological sites



Above: Pastries illustrated in Mrs Beeton's 'Everyday Cookery & Housekeeping' book, c.1890. Far Right: A mixture of cereal crops.

before, in 1993, being presented with some medieval crops which had been used as thatch on a building. The way buildings are thatched in some parts of the country often means that the base layer of thatch is the original with subsequent repairs or renewals just added on top. No-one had thought to study this layer of thatch before and it proved to be an invaluable source in the study of historic crop varieties and also farming techniques and food source. He tied in his research to the theme by talking about the crops in association with the quality of flour the wheat and rye mix would have made and why it is often impossible to replicate historic recipes using modern wheat when it has a different composition to historic varieties. He is now growing some historic varieties and is willing to supply flour to food historians if they want a more authentic approach to bread or pastry based recipes.

Laura Mason, a food historian, then talked about Barmen and Leavens the two different ways to add yeast to the mix to get the bread to rise. Barm is the brown froth scooped off fermenting ale, as there were many households who brewed their own ale this was quite a constant source. The other way was to use leaven which is a piece of dough saved from the last batch of baking and allowed to dry out often preserved in salt. It was then added to the new mix and as it contained yeast it kick

started the fermenting process of it. Leaven was said to be more economical and worked well with the courser mixes of wheat/rye flour, whereas barm worked better with more refined whiter, wheat flour. When hops were added to ale in the 15th century the taste of the ale changed which also affected the barm and made bitter tasting bread. Hopped ale began to be referred to as beer and recipes started stating 'best ale barm' to be used when making bread and cakes.

Malcolm Thick a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, has completed a lot of research on commercial gardening and small farming practices spoke about 'Bread of the English husbandmen and women c.1750'. He relied heavily on the diaries of a husbandman in Hertfordshire in the 18th century. Husbandmen were in a good position to be able to choose what type of bread they ate. The rich went for the status symbol of fine white bread, the poor had no choice but to buy the coarse cheap flour but the husbandman was not constricted by social status. He could afford to eat higher grade wheat flour if he wanted to or he could sell that grain at the market and use a cheaper mix of wheat and rye to make his household flour. He could choose which type of crops he sowed on his land. The different varieties of wheat or wheat and rye mix all responded differently to the weather and soil conditions so by sowing a number of varieties the husbandman was helping to guard against complete crop failure.

Susan McLellan Plaisted is a food historian and demonstrator from America. She works at Pennbury Manor, William Penn's reconstructed house on the Delaware River in Pennsylvania, and other historic sites demonstrating the art of baking in a clay oven. Unfortunately as there wasn't a clay oven to use, she talked us through the process using slides. This started off with the firing of the oven and how to get it to the required temperature, 475 degree Fahrenheit for baking. When it is hot enough the inside of the oven has turned a white colour and burnt off all the soot previously produced by the wood. The embers are scraped out and a damp cloth on a long pole is used to wipe the base of the oven. The first batch of bread loaves goes in and obviously cooks quickly as the oven is very hot, the second batch takes longer and has a different flavour and crust to it. After that cakes go in, followed by biscuits, and to use the remainder of the heat it was common to dry fruit out, or bake sweets such as cracknel in a cooling oven over night. Susan McLellan Plaisted talked



knowledgably about the practicalities of baking in clay ovens and the lessons learnt during nearly twenty years of practice.

The day was rounded off by the Food Historian, Ivan Day. He talked about 'Pies, Pasties and Pastry' from the sixteenth century to the end of the Victorian era. There were many varieties of pastry in use during this period as they had different functions. Wheaten flour was used to make pastry for the large elaborate pies containing meat or game. There was a base with walls and lid highly decorated sometimes including gold leaf detailing. These crusts were really only containers for the meat inside as the lid was broken open and the contents scooped out. The pastry might be broken up afterwards in the kitchens and used as a thickener for pottage or grated as a bread substitute in recipes. Pastry was used as a way of preserving the contents for longer. Some pies had a funnel on top which could be used for the dual purpose of letting steam out while cooking but when cold, clarified butter could be poured through it to seal the contents and help preserve it. Pasties during this period were made from one large piece of pastry with a joint of meat laid on it and the rest of the pastry folded over and sealed at the edge, they had no walls, lids and bases but could still be decorated on top. Fine pastry rather like modern shortcrust, was used for custards, cheesecakes, tarts etc and could be moulded into elaborate shapes so they looked good on the table but they could also be eaten.

To close the symposium Ivan Day had made two different sorts of pies. One was an elaborate game pie using a recipe and a mould recommended by Agnes Marshall, (a 19th century cook who ran a school of cookery). The other dish he had prepared was taken from an early recipe for mince pies when they still contained meat. Both these dishes were very flavoursome and a memorable way to finish a very interesting day.

To find out more about Historic Food go to www.historicfood.com a web site run by Ivan Day which now hosts a page for Leeds Food Symposium.

Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture

–Day Conference Review

On the 19th March the University of Leeds hosted a one day conference on 'Dialect and Folk Life Studies in Britain: The Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture in its Context.'

Sherri Steel—Curator of Social History
York Castle Museum

The conference was held to celebrate the launch, in June 2005, of the archive's online catalogue, which will mark the end of the LAVC Project (for details see Kathryn Jenner's article in Theory and Practice section). The website will infact bring together three archives - the material from two dialect archives and the folklife holdings from the Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies (IDFLS) in Leeds.

It was extremely heartening to learn that these valuable resources were, after twenty years, again going to become available to students and researchers. They had effectively been lost since the closure of the IDFLS in 1983 as a result of University cuts. Although no new material will be added to the catalogue in the future, and the collection will therefore be dead in that there will never be new contributions made to it, it is an extremely important resource.

The information that has been made accessible should not be thought of as merely the obscure province of the dialectologist and the folklorist! It is also potentially of great interest and value to social historians of all kinds, particularly those working in museums.

Much of the work covered by the IDFLS has included urban as well as rural topics. The dialect collected has resulted in fascinating responses - not only because of the way the contributor has replied, but in the details of the reply itself. Also the students at the Institute, notably those completing the Masters Degree in Folk Life Studies, studied topics which have a direct relevance to social history and often include details of material culture. There is a northern bias, but often students at the Institute based their research on the area where they lived and therefore information can be relevant to many different parts of the country. The archive deals with the written word, taped information and also includes photographs and film. Not all of this will be

available online but the archive is open to researchers at the University library.

To give you some idea of the kind of subject available I was lucky enough to study at the Institute myself, and researched Friendly Societies. I interviewed members of the established Orders including men from a Royal Order of Antediluvian Buffaloes Lodge in Leeds, a Loyal and Ancient Shepherd in Shipley and members of the Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows - often hearing how I had just missed seeing items, including a funeral pall, because they had only just destroyed them, and gaining details of ceremonies and rituals which were not written down anywhere else. I also visited museum collections and archives throughout Yorkshire and took many notes and photographs, and was able to begin to tie together collections of artefacts, oral history and research to form a more detailed idea of the significance ritual behaviour and artefacts had in this context. Other students studied traditional crafts for example, and the information is relevant to a wide range of historical subjects from the study of child development to that of land use.

As one of the speakers at the conference put it, the archive is also now a snap shot of the collecting that was being done at this period. It is itself a record of the way folklife and English cultural tradition has been collected in this country, and it is also a reflection of the neglect that the subject has always suffered - and continues to suffer today. At the moment the only active similar institution in England is the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield. This is in contrast to much stronger institutions in Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and on the continent, where it has been regarded as more urgent and important to secure and protect evidence of cultures and identities under threat from more powerful neighbours. In England there has been apparently little need to declare or secure a national identity in the same sort of way. Such ideas are perhaps regarded as being tainted by the worst kind of nationalism, or, perhaps by the folksy idyll of olde England and Morris dancers on the village green, (with maybe a museum of bygones lurking vaguely in the background!). The neglect that has resulted from this has stunted the field.

The conference itself was opened by Stewart Sanderson, who was the Director of the IDFLS from the 1960's until it was closed in the 1980s, he gave an account of the development of the Dialect Survey, begun by Harold Orton and continued by Stanley Ellis which finally culminated in the Linguistic Atlas of England published in 1978.

Other contributors included Ian MacKenzie from the School of Scottish Studies, who discussed his fieldwork and looked at the distinctive approach of the ethnological photographer, and Ian Russell who told us about the work of the Elphinstone Institute in researching and promoting the culture and traditions of North East Scotland. Robin Wiltshire and Kathryn Jenner told us about the Leeds Archive and Jonathan Robinson, Curator of English Accents and Dialects at the British Library, introduced us to the collections that covered the dialect surveys, the National Sound Archive and many wonderful sources all well worth exploring. John Widdowson, Former Director of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, University of Sheffield, emphasised the importance of connecting and publicising all the hidden repositories of similar material - for example the fairground material at Sheffield and the First World War collection at Leeds - and discussed the struggle that there was to preserve the handful of institutions which were currently collecting English language and traditions. Beth Thomas, Keeper of the Department of Social and Cultural History at the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, gave a background to the establishment of the Museum which broke new ground by having a holistic approach, combining artefacts, buildings and a folk archive.

This lack of a holistic approach elsewhere was one which did seem to become very obvious by the end of the day. There were very few museum professionals at the conference. Those who collected for the various archives seemed to be very aware of the importance of collecting written, oral and aural material, and recording visually through photographs or film. However (and I may be wrong about this!) there seemed much less awareness of the importance of collecting relevant three dimensional objects, or of working with other institutions who may be able to help with the collection and display of such material.

It was an enjoyable and stimulating day which left us with much to think about!

Web links:

LAVC: www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc
British Library: www.bl.uk
National Sound Archive: www.bl.uk/nsa
NATCECT: www.shef.ac/english/natcect

The Great Elixir of Life



Michelle Petyt

Assistant Curator of Social History,
York Castle Museum

We have at York Castle Museum a large collection of pharmaceutical equipment and bottles. Some of this is unsorted and remains in wooden crates with bulk accession numbers; left as it was when it was removed from an old chemist's shop somewhere in North Yorkshire. Recently I had the opportunity to look through some of these items with a volunteer who had expressed an interest in our various bottle collections. A self-confessed bottle 'anorak' he was able to bring his expert knowledge to the collections, and together we have begun to catalogue this previously under researched area of the collections.

One of the bottles which came to light was a small octagonal aqua glass bottle. Hinge-moulded with kick-up base and solid pontil, the bottle also has a flared lip and can be dated to between 1780 and 1820. Embossed low on the front panel are the words 'TRUE DAFFY'S ELIXIR'.

Daffy's was one of the best known patent medicines of its age. It was invented by the Reverend Thomas Daffy. Under the patronage of the Earl of Rutland he became

rector of the parish of Harby in Leicestershire in 1647. However, he appears to have given some kind of offence to the Countess of Rutland and in 1666 he was removed on her instigation to the inferior living of Redmile, also in Leicestershire. There he remained until his death in 1680. It is not known when exactly Thomas Daffy invented his 'elixir salutis', but in an advertisement in the *Post Boy*, 1st January 1707-08 his daughter Catherine stated that during Thomas's lifetime the elixir was sold by his son Daniel, an apothecary at Nottingham. Catherine also states that the secret of its preparation was passed on to his kinsman, Antony Daffy.

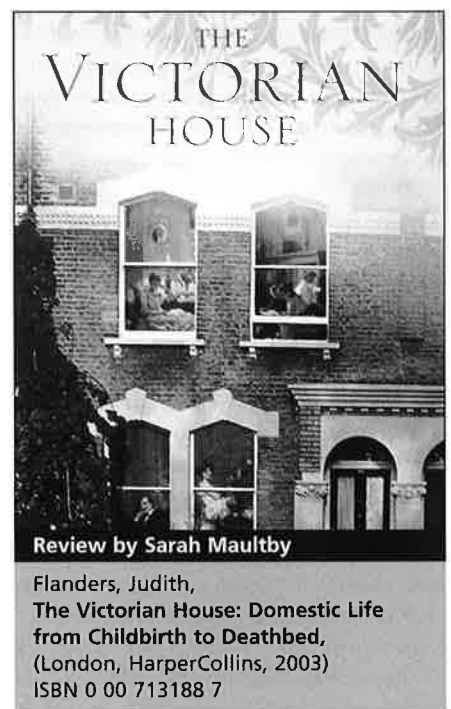
Like many other patent medicines Daffy's claimed to be able to cure almost anything. Indeed its promoters usually avoided associating it with any particular ailment so as not to limit its market. It was seen as a general pick-me-up and cure-all when all other medicine had failed. Sometimes it was advertised as particularly good for stomach and bowel complaints and it may well have been primarily a purgative. One recipe of 1700 lists the ingredients for 'True Daffy' as aniseed, fennel seed, parsley seed, Spanish liquorice, senna, rhubarb, elecampane, jalap, saffron, manna, raisin, cochineal and brandy. A chemical analysis carried out on the contents of an excavated bottle in the 1940s found that it consisted mainly of alcohol and senna. Its alcoholic properties were certainly recognised fairly early on and Daffy became a slang word for gin.

Daffy's Elixir appears to have been well known and well used. It is mentioned in the letters of Horace Walpole and it also appears in the literary works of William Makepeace Thackeray (*Vanity Fair*), Anthony Trollope (*Barchester Towers*) and Arthur Conan Doyle (*Micah Clarke*).

Patent medicines remained popular for a long time. Cheaper than prescribed medicines, they maintained their position in the market place until well into the 20th century. It was then that various measures were brought in to discredit them. Their contents were analysed and published and legislation was introduced to prevent them from claiming miracle cures for certain

ailments. It was not, however, until the formation of the National Health Service in 1948, which made prescription medicines available for all, did patent medicines finally lose their popularity.

Daffy's Elixir is still desirable today, but not as a cure-all. It illustrates how popular, and how important, patent medicines were in the health of the nation. Daffy's was one of the most enduring of these quack cures and we are lucky at York to have an early example of a Daffy's True Elixir bottle.



Review by Sarah Mautby

Flanders, Judith,
**The Victorian House: Domestic Life
from Childbirth to Deathbed,**
(London, HarperCollins, 2003)
ISBN 0 00 713188 7

As the title and front cover suggest, this book is based around a typical middle class, Victorian terrace house but it incorporates more than just the bricks and mortar. It uses the rooms of the house to describe both the physical surroundings and the Victorian ideals of the 'home'.

Judith Flanders takes each room of the house to describe a different aspect of domestic life. Chapters are named after the different rooms, such as The Scullery, The Drawing Room, The Sickroom. They deal

TEA BREAK

Muddled Words

Below are number of muddled words.

You are invited to rearrange the letters so that the words answer to the section heading.



BOOK CORNER

with subjects like servants, cleaning, laundry, the public face of the family, the social standing and income, the wifely skills needed to run a well organised home, and common illnesses, medicines, home nursing, death and mourning, respectively. Through the many different rooms she manages to describe the advancements of the Victorian age from gas and electricity, to washing machines and sewing machines and the moral values from attitudes towards class and social standing to women's roles and expectations.

The sources used in this book are extensive. Judith Flanders writes in the introduction, about her sources as being the same ones which surrounded the Victorians "...and formed their notions of what a home should be - magazines, advertisements, manuals and fiction. In describing people's daily lives, I look first at what theory prescribed and described in these print sources, and then try to discover the reality in reportage, diaries, letters and journals".

Novels have also been used where the author has written about background details and Judith Flanders has provided a quick guide to the authors and the books. These cover both the well known Victorian authors such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins to the ones which were only popular during that period such as Mrs Henry Wood and Charlotte Yonge.

This book is a very good, well researched and entertaining read. It makes a welcome addition to the bookshelves of social historians studying the period from 1850-1890 and for social history curators it is a delight to read contemporary accounts of women's lives within the home, it helps to put in to context the many objects we have in our collections which once would have had a purpose and meaning within 'The Victorian House'.

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